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ABSTRACT

The extent to which the instruction, assessment, and Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) test preparation activities of language arts teachers aligned with the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLOs) and the reading and writing tasks on the MSPAP was studied in the 1996-97 school year. The reading and writing activities of 280 elementary and middle school language arts teachers were collected in the fall and spring and analyzed with a coding scheme. In general, the majority of the language teachers' classroom activities reflected some of the MLOs. However, the extent to which the classroom instruction and assessment activities reflect the many characteristics of the MSPAP tasks is more limited. Slightly more than one-third of the instruction and assessment tasks were classified at one of the two highest score levels on the MSPAP scale, and 49% of the reading and 66% of the writing MSPAP test preparation activities were classified at one of the two highest levels. These results support the results from language arts questionnaires suggesting that teachers have made changes in their instruction based on the MLOs and the MSPAP. (Contains 18 tables.) (SLD)

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Impact of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP): Evidence from Classroom Instruction and Assessment Activities (Reading, Writing)

by

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Impact of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP):
Evidence from Language Arts Classroom Activities

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to determine the extent to which the language arts teachers' classroom instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities collected during the 1996-97 school year are aligned with the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLO's) and the reading and writing tasks on MSPAP. Each of the teachers' reading and writing activities were analyzed using a coding scheme designed to provide information about the extent to which the teachers' activities reflect the MLO's, the response type required of the student, the level of integration with other subject areas, the amount of group work, and the overall similarity to MSPAP tasks. In addition, analyses were conducted to determine if there are any differences between the teachers' instruction activities and assessment activities in terms of their alignment with the MLO's, and to determine if any differences exist in the teachers' activities across grade levels.

Methodology

Data Collection and Instruments

Language arts teachers were asked to collect samples of instruction and assessment activities used in their classroom during the 1996-97 school year. The activities were collected at two time points. In December of 1996, teachers were asked to send in approximately 5 language arts instruction activities, 5 language arts assessment activities, and 1 sample of a language arts scoring scheme used in their classrooms from September to December 1996. Similarly, in the spring they were asked to send in another set of 5 instruction activities, 5 assessment activities, and 1 scoring scheme used from January to June 1997. In addition, teachers were also asked to send a sample of a MSPAP test preparation activity used prior to the administration of MSPAP. If a teacher taught more than one language arts class, they were requested to obtain these materials from a typical class that they taught.

A data collection form was developed to obtain information from each teacher regarding the classroom from which the activities were selected. The data collection forms asked teachers to indicate the grade level, the nature of the students' ability levels for the language arts class (e.g., heterogeneous ability group, homogeneous ability group, exclusively special education, exclusively gifted and talented), and the nature of the content taught in the class (e.g., language arts, reading only, writing only, English). Each teacher completed a form and returned it along with their activities for each collection period.

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Teachers were also provided with a set of labels to attach to their classroom activities. On these labels teachers were instructed to indicate whether the activity was used for instructional purposes, assessment purposes, or scoring/evaluating purposes. They also were asked to indicate the source of the activity (e.g., teacher developed, commercial resource or textbook, county-developed, state-developed).

Procedures for Coding Language Arts Classroom Activities

The classroom instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities were analyzed for each language arts teacher using a coding scheme designed to provide information about the extent to which the activities reflect the Maryland Learning Outcomes for reading and writing, the overall similarity to MSPAP-like tasks, and a variety of other features (e.g., response type required of students, integration with other subject areas, etc.). The Maryland Learning Outcomes and the format and content of MSPAP served as the basis for the coding schemes that were developed for the analysis of the classroom activities. An additional coding scheme was developed to analyze the scoring schemes. Features of this coding scheme included the type of scoring scheme (e.g., letter/numerical grades, checklists, point systems, and scale levels), the components of the activity that are being evaluated, and the evaluator of the activity (e.g., teacher, student, peer). However, only the results for the classroom activities (instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities) are included in this paper.

A total of four raters coded the classroom activities. A formal training session was conducted to familiarize the raters with the coding scheme using a sample set of pre-coded activities. The raters coded another set of sample activities independently and their codes were compared and discussed by the group. After the formal training was complete, pairs of raters individually coded sets of classroom activities from a school for a given collection period (fall or spring). To ensure that all raters shared a common understanding of the coding scheme, subsets of raters met to discuss their discrepancies and reached a consensus on the codes for each activity within the set. This consensus coding was done for a sample of elementary schools and a sample of middle schools. Thus, for a small percentage of classroom activities (19%) one set of codes, agreed upon by two or more raters, was obtained.

After it was determined that the raters reached a shared understanding of the coding scheme and were proficient in applying it to a variety of classroom activities, each rater individually coded sets of classroom activities. Approximately 25% of the sets of classroom activities (an elementary or middle school teacher's activities from either fall or spring) were coded individually by two raters. An overall adjusted rate of agreement between the raters was then calculated.[1] The adjusted rate of agreement was

[1] Percent agreement was considered to be too lenient of an index of rater agreement because for several of the categories to be coded there were a range of options that could be selected. As an example, for the response type component, one to twenty-two response types could be selected for an activity. However, the majority of the activities had between one and six response types selected. A simple percent agreement based on each of the

85% across all instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation reading activities and 88% across all instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation writing activities.

Sample

A subset of schools in the entire sample (approximately 57%) were asked to participate in the collection of the classroom activities. Overall, 51 schools with a total of 372 language arts teachers were asked to participate in this aspect of the study. Some or all of the teachers from 44 of the schools participated, resulting in a school participation rate for classroom activities of 86%. This represents schools from 15 different systems/counties in Maryland. Within these 44 schools, 280 language arts teachers sent in all or a subset of the activities requested (75%).

Description of Language Arts Classes and Teachers

As described previously, language arts teachers were asked to send in a total of approximately 10 instruction activities, 10 assessment activities, 2 scoring schemes, and 1 MSPAP test preparation activity used in their classrooms throughout the 1996-97 school year. If a teacher taught more than one language arts class, they were requested to select activities from a typical class they taught. A total of 280 language arts teachers sent in a sample of their classroom activities. The following sections provide a description of the type of language arts classroom from which activities were obtained, the heterogeneity of language arts classes, information on sample sizes by grade and type of activity, and the sources of the activities.

Type of Language Arts Class

On the data collection form for each collection period, teachers were asked to indicate the type of language arts class from which their sample of classroom activities was selected. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of the elementary classes were labeled as "language arts" classes (81%), while a slightly lower percentage (67%) of the middle school classes were "language arts" classes. Other types of classes in the middle school were labeled by the teachers as English (14%), reading (13%), or writing (3%), The percentages of elementary classes of these types were lower (1%, 8%, and 2%, respectively).

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twenty-two response types would have inflated the index for rater agreement. Thus, an adjusted percent agreement was used. Three sources of information were taken into consideration to obtain the adjustment. For example, the frequency distributions for the number of total response types coded per activity, the percentage of times each category was coded, and raters' knowledge of the coding scheme and nature of the activities.

Table 1.
Type of Language Arts Classes from which Classroom Activities were Selected

	All Grades n=316*	Elementary n=203	Middle n=113
Language Arts	76%	81%	67%
Reading	10%	8%	13%
Writing	2%	2%	3%
English	5%	1%	14%
Not Indicated	6%	8%	3%

* Note: This number is larger than the 280 teachers who sent in classroom activities because 36 teachers had a change in the type of language arts class taught from fall to spring.

Heterogeneity of Language Arts Class

Also on the data collection form, teachers were asked to indicate the heterogeneity of the students in the language arts class from which their sample of classroom activities were selected. As indicated in Table 2, 78% of the elementary classes compared to only 36% of the middle school classes were classified by the teacher as heterogeneous. A larger percentage of middle school classes (43%) than elementary classes (12%) were classified as homogeneous, either on-grade, above-grade, or below-grade level. In addition, a larger percentage of middle school classes (15%) compared to elementary classes (6%) were classified as either exclusively special education or gifted and talented.

Table 2.
Heterogeneity of Language Arts Classes from which Classroom Activities were Selected

	All Grades n=320*	Elementary n=199	Middle n=121
Heterogeneous	62%	78%	36%
Homogeneous	23%	12%	43%
On-Grade	11%	6%	20%
Above-Grade	8%	3%	17%
Below-Grade	4%	3%	6%
Exclusively Special Education	8%	5%	12%
Exclusively Gifted & Talented	2%	1%	3%
Not Indicated	6%	5%	7%

* Note: This number is larger than the 280 teachers who sent in classroom activities because 40 teachers had a change in the heterogeneity of the language arts class taught from fall to spring.

Teachers and Classroom Activities by Grade Level

On average across the entire 1996-97 school year, approximately 13 classroom activities were collected per teacher. For each grade level, Table 3 indicates the number and percentage of teachers at each grade level who sent in classroom activities and also the total number and percentage of all

classroom activities received. For example, 39 2nd grade teachers sent in a total of 464 classroom activities, which represents 14% of the teachers and 13% of the classroom activities. The percentages across grades for the number of teachers and the number of activities are somewhat similar, although a slightly smaller percentage of off-grade teachers (2, 4, and 7) versus on-grade teachers (3, 5, and 8) sent in activities. This difference can most likely be explained because teachers who taught both on- and off-grades were asked to send in materials from their on-grade class.

Table 3.
Teachers and Classroom Activities by Grade Level

Grade	Teachers		Activities	
	Number (n=283)*	Percentage	Number (n=3559)	Percentage
2	39	14%	464	13%
3	54	19%	745	21%
4	39	14%	489	14%
5	47	17%	613	17%
7	43	15%	530	15%
8	61	22%	718	20%

* Note: This number is larger than the 280 teachers who sent in classroom activities because 3 teachers had a change in grade taught from fall to spring.

Type of Classroom Activity

Teachers were provided with labels to attach to each classroom activity indicating the type of activity (i.e., instruction, assessment, MSPAP test preparation). In the first two columns of Table 4, the number and percentage of activities for each type is shown. Across all grades (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8) there was a total of 1900 instruction activities and 1208 assessment activities. For grades 3, 5, and 8 (on-grades only) there was a total of 113 MSPAP test preparation activities. The table also includes a category called "not coded". These 338 activities were not coded for one of two reasons. One reason for not coding an activity was because it pertained strictly to another content area such as social studies or science. The other types of tasks that were not coded include puzzles, games, word searches etc., or teacher notes and/or lesson plans that had no clear indication as to what the students were required to do.

The last three columns of Table 4 indicate the number and percentage of teachers providing each type of material as well as the average number of each type of activity per teacher. As an example, about 53% (1900 out of 3559) of the activities received were labeled as instruction, and nearly all the teachers (98%) (273 out of 280) teachers sent in at least one instruction activity. Thus, the mean number of instructional activities provided per teacher was approximately 7. It should be noted that the percentages among the grade levels for each of the types of activities were similar.

Table 4.
Type of Classroom Activity

	Activities (n=3559)		Teachers (n=280)		Mean Number of Activities
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Per Teacher
Instruction	1900	53%	273	98%	6.96
Assessment	1208	34%	233	83%	5.18
MSPAP Test Preparation (3,5,8)	113	3%	57	35%*	1.98
Not Coded	338	9%	134	48%	2.52

*Note: This percentage is based only on the on-grade teachers (3, 5, 8) and not on the full sample of 280 teachers.

Sources of Classroom Activities

Teachers were also asked to indicate the source of each activity on the label. Table 5 indicates the sources of the instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities across all grades. A comparison of results for each grade indicated quite similar results. On average, 40% of the instruction activities were teacher-developed, and a little over one-third (36%) were from textbook or commercial resources. Nearly half of the assessment activities (47%) were teacher-developed and 32% were from textbook or commercial resources. Approximately equal percentages for instruction and assessment activities were county developed (5% and 6% respectively). The percentages of instruction and assessment activities obtained from state-level materials, such as MSPAP Release Tasks, Maryland Consortium Tasks, and Maryland Performance-Based Exemplars, were very small.

When examining the MSPAP test preparation activities, the sources were somewhat different than for the instruction and assessment activities. The percentage of teacher-developed MSPAP test preparation activities and textbook or commercial resources for MSPAP test preparation activities was the same (23%), and the percentage of county-developed MSPAP test preparation activities was only slightly lower (19%). Therefore, as compared to the instruction and assessment activities, fewer MSPAP test preparation activities were teacher-developed or obtained from textbooks or commercial resources, however more test preparation activities were county-developed. In addition, there were more MSPAP Release Tasks (6%), and other state-level materials (12%) used for MSPAP test preparation compared to instruction and assessment activities.

Table 5.
Sources of Classroom Activities

	Instruction n=1900	Assessment n=1208	MSPAP Test Prep n=113 (3, 5, 8 only)
Teacher/Other Teacher/ School Developed	40%	47%	23%
Textbook/Commercial Resources	36%	32%	23%
County/Another County Developed	5%	6%	19%
Teacher and Textbook/ Teacher and County Developed	10%	7%	11%
MSPAP Release Tasks	<1%	<1%	6%
MD Consortium/Exemplars	1%	1%	12%
Other/Teacher and Student/Class (Scoring)	<1%	<1%	0%
Cannot Be Determined	7%	8%	7%

Results

Overall Description of Reading and Writing Activities

The coding scheme for analyzing the language arts classroom activities consisted of two components: a reading and a writing component. Depending on what was required of the students, the language arts instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities were coded for reading only, for writing only, or for both reading and writing. A reading activity was considered to be an activity that required students to either read a paragraph or more from a textbook or other resource, or to respond to various reading skill exercises such as vocabulary exercises and defining literary terms. A writing activity involved writing at least a paragraph or responding to writing skill exercises including spelling, grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and/or alphabetizing.

Table 6 shows the percentage of language arts classroom activities that were considered to be "reading only", "writing only", "reading and writing linked", and "reading and writing not linked". Overall, there was a larger percentage of "reading only" activities compared to "writing only" activities (40% versus 25%), and about one-third (33%) of the language arts activities consisted of a reading component connected to a writing component, that is, "reading and writing linked". In general, an activity coded as "reading and writing linked" required students to read a passage and respond to at least one question based on the reading by writing one or more paragraphs. Only a very small percentage of classroom activities (1%) consisted of both a reading component and a writing component but were not connected, that is, "reading and writing not linked".

Table 6.
Percentages of Reading and Writing Activities

	(n=3221)
Reading Only	40%
Writing Only	25%
Reading & Writing Linked	33%
Reading & Writing Not Linked	1%

Overall, 74% of all the language arts instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities included at least a reading component, and 59% of all the language arts activities included at least a writing component.

A comparison of the percentages of reading and writing instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities indicated a higher percentage of MSPAP test preparation activities that were "reading and writing linked" activities (45%) compared to the instruction and assessment activities (32% and 34%, respectively). By grade level for the instruction activities, 5th and 8th grade had slightly higher percentages of activities that were "reading and writing linked" (38%) compared to other grade levels such as 2nd grade (26%) and 7th grade (24%). For the assessment activities and the MSPAP test preparation activities, differences among grades levels were more noticeable. For example, 45% of the 8th grade assessment activities were "reading and writing linked" compared to only 29% for 7th grade; and 67% of the 8th grade MSPAP test preparation activities were "reading and writing linked" compared to only 39% for 3rd grade and 26% for 5th grade. Differences between on- and off-grade levels were larger at the middle school levels than at the elementary school levels.

Reading and Writing Skill Exercises and Tasks

A further distinction in reading and writing activities was made with respect to the purpose of the activity. In general, some activities have a purpose as defined by the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLO's); these activities will be referred to as "tasks". Other activities that do not contain a purpose, as defined by the MLO's, will be referred to as "skill exercises". There are a few exceptions to this classification scheme, and they are noted within the following descriptions of "tasks" and "skills".

To be coded as a reading "task", the activity needed to reflect at least one "Purpose of Reading" and/or at least one "Stance of Reading" as defined by the MLO's. The Purposes of Reading are: Reading for literary experience, reading to be informed, and reading to perform a task. The Stances of Reading are: Global understanding, interpretive stance, personal stance, and critical stance. (The reading MLO's will be described in more detail in a later section of this paper.) In addition, a reading "task" must also contain at a least a paragraph of reading material. The only exception to this classification were activities

that did not have a reading purpose as defined by the MLO's but did reflect at least one reading stance, typically global understanding. They required students to read one or more paragraphs (not obtained from novels, plays, nonfiction books, articles, etc.) for basic reading comprehension. Therefore, these activities were labeled as "reading comprehension" in this coding scheme and were classified as reading "tasks".

A reading "skill exercise" does not have an MLO reading purpose nor an MLO reading stance. Examples of reading skill exercises included vocabulary exercises, defining literary terms, and circling the adjectives in a reading passage. It should be noted that reading activities may have questions related to "skill exercises" as well as reading "tasks". In these cases, the reading activity was coded as both a "skill exercise" and a "task".

To be coded as a writing "task", the activity required the student to write at least one paragraph. In many cases, the activity explicitly stated that the length of writing should be at least a paragraph. However, when it did not, other pieces of information were used to determine if the length of writing would most likely be a paragraph or more. For instance, when the student was asked to write a letter, poem, story, speech, article, journal entry, etc., then it was assumed that the response would be at least a paragraph. On the other hand, when the student was asked a series of short-answer questions that require a phrase or sentence after reading, it was not considered a writing "task". In addition to the length of the writing activity as a criteria for writing tasks, a writing "task" typically reflected at least one of the MLO Purposes of Writing: Writing to inform, writing to persuade, or writing to express personal ideas. However, a small number of writing "tasks" did not reflect one of these MLO's and were labeled as "summarizing/interpreting reading material". In these cases, the writing activity included a reading "task" and required students to summarize, interpret, and/or critically analyze the reading passage. Although these writing "tasks" did not reflect any of the MLO-defined writing purposes, they required students to reflect on what they read by summarizing or interpreting the material.

A writing "skill exercise" did not reflect any of the MLO Purposes of Writing nor "summarizing/interpreting reading material". Instead, writing "skill exercises" included spelling, grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and/or alphabetizing. It should be noted that writing activities may have consisted of both "skill exercises" as well as one or more writing "tasks". In these cases, the writing activity was coded as both a "skill exercise" and a "task".

Table 7 indicates the percentages of activities that were coded as "skill only" and "task only" and "both skill and task". The results are similar for both the reading and writing activities. Only a small percentage of the activities were coded as "skill only" (12% and 18%, respectively), and approximately 75% of all reading and writing activities were coded as "task only". When considering the activities that were "both skill and tasks", the percentage of activities with at least a "task" increases to 87% for all reading activities and 82% for all writing activities.

Table 7.
Percentages of Reading and Writing Skill Exercises and Tasks

	Reading Activities n=2402	Writing Activities n=1923
Skill Only	12%	18%
Task Only	73%	78%
Both Skill & Task	14%	4%

The percentages of reading and writing "skill exercises" and "tasks" are somewhat similar for instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities, with the MSPAP test preparation activities having slightly larger percentages of "task only" activities (85% for reading and 94% for writing) compared to instruction and assessment activities (approximately 72% for reading and 75% for writing). Variations between grade levels are small.

Reading and Writing Components

All reading and writing activities were coded in terms of several components. This section describes each of the components and provides summary information related to the categories within each of the components as well as some significance tests to examine differences between grade levels and type of activity (i.e., instruction versus assessment). The components are: reflection of the Maryland Learning Outcomes, type of response required of the student, group work, integration with other subject areas, and similarity to MSPAP tasks.

Maryland Learning Outcomes

Reading Activities. All instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation reading activities were coded in terms of whether they included the Purposes for Reading and the Stances of Reading as defined by the MLO's. With regard to the reading purposes, the MLO's indicate that "students will demonstrate their ability to vary their orientation to the text by interacting with a variety of texts for different purposes". The three reading purposes are 1) Reading for literary experience, which involves reading novels, plays, poems, or short stories; 2) reading to be informed, which involves reading content texts, articles, and editorials; and 3) reading to perform a task, which involves following directions and requires some action of the student.

Table 8 presents the percentages for each reading purpose. Out of the activities coded as reading "tasks", 91% reflected at least one of the three MLO reading purposes. Reading for literary experience was the most frequent purpose for reading, in that 70% of the reading tasks reflected this purpose, while

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reading to perform a task was the least frequent purpose (3%). Notice that the percentages for the three MLO reading purposes sum to more than 91%. This is because some of the reading "tasks" (about 12%) were coded for more than one purpose. For instance, reading historical fiction was coded as "reading for literary experience" and also coded as "reading to be informed". The remaining 9% of the reading "tasks" that did not have an MLO-defined reading purpose were coded to have a purpose labeled "reading comprehension", which included tasks that involved basic comprehension of at least a paragraph. As mentioned previously, these reading tasks did not have an MLO-defined reading purpose, however they did reflect at least one MLO reading stance, which was typically global understanding. All reading "tasks" were additionally coded as to the type of reading material students were required to read. About 62% of all reading "tasks" involved reading novels or short stories, and about 14% involved a reading passage of one or more paragraphs that was not from a novel, short story, play, poem, non-fiction book or newspaper article. Other reading "tasks" required that students read plays, poems, or songs (7%); articles or newspapers (7%), and non-fiction books such as biographies (5%).

The second column in Table 8 shows the percentages of all reading activities, including reading "skill exercises" and "tasks", that reflected each purpose of reading. These percentages indicate the extent to which all reading activities collected from the teachers reflected an MLO Purpose of Reading and/or Stance of Reading. In other words, 80% of all reading activities contained at least one MLO purpose and an additional 8% contained the "reading comprehension" purpose, therefore the remaining 12% of the reading activities were "skill exercises" only. Recall that reading skill exercises do not have an MLO reading purpose nor the purpose of reading comprehension. Of this 12%, over half (53%) were coded as "contextual vocabulary" (defining vocabulary words that are set in a reading passage), 21% were coded as "vocabulary not in a passage", 14% were coded as "literature skills" (e.g., defining or identifying literary terms such as irony, theme, or metaphor), 11% were coded as "reference skills" (e.g., using the card catalog, or internet), and 16% were coded as "other skills" such as phonics, pronunciation, reading aloud for practice, and circling adjectives in a reading passage. A small number of reading "skill exercises" were coded in more than one of these categories.

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Table 8.
Maryland Learning Outcomes Reflected in Reading Activities

	Reading Tasks (n=2102)	All Reading Activities (n=2402)
Reading Purposes		
At Least One MLO Purpose	91%	80%
For Literary Experience	70%	62%
To Be Informed	30%	26%
To Perform a Task	3%	3%
Other Purpose (not an MLO)		
Reading Comprehension	9%	8%
Reading Stances		
At Least One MLO Stance	100%	88%
Global and/or Interpretive	95%	84%
Personal	32%	28%
Critical	20%	17%

Reading activities were also coded according to whether they reflected the MLO reading stances. The four MLO stances of reading allow students to demonstrate their ability to interact with a variety of texts. The stances include global understanding (ability to construct an initial, global understanding of the text by considering theme, character's or story's main problem, author's overall purpose or point of view, etc.); developing interpretation (clarify, verify, and revise one's understanding by considering such aspects as plot and character development, by organizing text information, or by following directions to complete a task); personal reflection/response (consider and compare the author's point of view with student's own point of view, consider and compare new information from the text with the student's own background knowledge); and critical stance (identify and analyze the author's perspective and craft in order to form and substantiate a critical response).

As indicated in Table 8, all reading "tasks" (100%) had at least one MLO reading stance. This is because the inclusion of a stance is required of a reading "task" as defined previously. Once again, each reading task could consist of multiple reading stances, and approximately 37% of the reading tasks did include more than one reading stance. Nearly all tasks (95%) explicitly required a global and/or interpretive stance[2], almost one-third (32%) required a personal stance, and one-fifth (20%) required a critical stance. Further, all reading "tasks" were coded as to whether the task explicitly required students to provide examples, evidence, or support based on their reading. Approximately 27% of the reading

[2] The "global understanding" reading stance and the "developing interpretation" reading stance were combined for the purposes of this analysis. The reading material was not usually included with the activity, and it was often difficult to determine whether the questions on the reading activity reflected a global stance, an interpretive stance, or both. Thus, the two categories were combined.

tasks did require this type of explicit support. Similar to the results for the purposes of reading, a column of percentages is also included in Table 8 that represents the percentage of all reading activities that required a reading stance. Overall, 88% of all reading activities required at least one MLO reading stance.

Writing Activities. All instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation writing activities were coded in terms of whether they included the Purposes for Writing and the Stages of the Writing Process as defined by the MLO's. With regard to the writing purposes, the MLO's indicate that "students will demonstrate ability to write for various audiences and to address a variety of purposes". The three writing purposes are: 1) Writing to inform (convey information using factual or personal data), 2) writing to persuade (convince or refute by supporting a point of view), and 3) writing to express personal ideas (communicate feelings and imagination).

Table 9 presents the percentages for each writing purpose. Out of the activities classified as writing "tasks", 74% reflected at least one of the three MLO-defined writing purposes. Writing to inform was the most frequent purpose for writing (41%), 22% of the "tasks" reflected writing to express personal ideas, and the least frequent purpose was writing to persuade (12%). The "choice" category (3%) consisted of those tasks for which students had a choice in what they were to write about, thus allowing for a choice in the purpose of writing. Only a very small percentage of the writing "tasks" had more than one MLO writing purpose coded. The remaining 26% of the writing "tasks" that did not have an MLO-defined purpose for writing were coded to have a purpose defined as "summarizing/interpreting reading material". As previously described, these writing "tasks" were not classified as having an MLO-defined writing purpose because the purpose of the questions in the task did not adequately match any of the three MLO writing purposes. However, they did require students to summarize, interpret, critically analyze or reflect on the reading passage.

The second column in Table 9 indicates the percentages across all writing activities, including all writing "skill exercises" and "tasks", that reflected each purpose of writing. These percentages indicate the extent to which all writing activities collected from the teachers reflected an MLO purpose of writing. In other words, 60% of all writing activities contained at least one MLO purpose and an additional 21% contained the "summarizing/interpreting reading material" purpose, therefore the remaining 19% of the writing activities were "skill exercises" only. Recall that writing "skill exercises" do not have an MLO reading purpose nor the purpose of "summarizing/interpreting reading material". Of this 19% of reading skill exercises, approximately 76% included "writing mechanics exercises, not in paragraph form" (e.g., series of sentences/phrases for which students are required to identify incorrect verb tenses, spelling errors, or alphabetizing and punctuation errors), 20% included "writing mechanics exercises in paragraph form" (e.g., students are required to correct capitalization errors, provide punctuation, complete a

salutation in a letter, etc.), 5% involved writing hyperboles, similes, and metaphors, and 6% involved writing or rewriting phrases or sentences for stylistic purposes. A small number of writing "skill exercises" were coded into more than one of these categories.

Table 9.
Maryland Learning Outcomes Reflected in Writing Activities

	Writing Tasks (n=1569)	Writing Activities (n=1923)
Writing Purposes		
At Least One MLO Purpose	74%	60%
To Inform	41%	33%
To Persuade	12%	10%
To Express Personal Ideas	22%	18%
Choice	3%	2%
Other Purpose (Not an MLO)		
Summarizing/Interpreting Reading Material	26%	21%
Writing Process		
All 4 Stages (Prewrite, Draft, Revision, Proofread)	20%	16%
2 or 3 Stages		
Prewrite, Draft	40%	32%
Draft, Revision, Proofread	1%	1%
Draft, Proofread	1%	1%
1 Stage (Draft Only)	36%	29%
Cannot Be Determined	3%	2%

The writing activities were also coded in terms of the writing process. As defined by the MLO's, there are four stages of the writing process. They are: prewriting (generating ideas for topics, setting purposes, ordering ideas, or identifying audiences), drafting (writing a first draft for a purpose and an audience), revising (using self, peer, and teacher input to revise the draft; considering completeness and appropriateness of style), and proofreading (considering correctness and language in use). To gain more information about the prewriting stage of the writing process, the specific type of prewriting component was coded for each writing "task". The prewriting component found most frequently was the development or use of graphic organizers (32%). Graphic organizers included outlines, character maps, story webs, and other graphic devices that helped students organize their information prior to writing. Other prewriting components included answering questions or prompts (23%), individual brainstorming (18%), activities in other content areas such as creating a table or graph (15%), and group brainstorming or class discussion (7%).

In order for a writing activity to be coded for each of the stages, the activity had to explicitly mention the stage of the writing process. Therefore, the percentages in Table 9 for writing process may be

underestimates. It is possible that teachers required their students to proceed through all, or at least more than one, of the writing stages; however, the teacher may not have made an explicit indication of this on the actual activity, and thus it would not be coded as such. The only exception to this is when the teacher indicated that "the writing process was used" without indicating each of the four stages explicitly. For these instances, the activities were coded for all four stages of the writing process. However, this occurred for only a small portion of the tasks (3%).

As indicated in Table 9, 20% of the writing tasks were coded as requiring all four stages of the writing process, i.e., prewriting, drafting, revising, and proofreading. An additional 42% of the writing activities involved two or three stages of the writing process. Therefore, a total of 62% of the writing tasks involved at least two stages of the writing process, that is going beyond writing a draft only. The "cannot be determined" category included tasks for which only student work was included, thus it was difficult to determine whether the work represented students' first draft or students' final draft after proceeding through each of the writing process stages. The results shown in the second column indicate that 16% of all writing activities included all four stages of the writing process, and an additional 34% included two or three of the stages.

Comparisons by grade level and type of activity. To determine if there are differences in percentages between grade levels and differences in percentages for instruction activities versus assessment activities, a repeated measures analysis of variance with one between factor (grade) and one within factor (type of activity) was conducted. Table 10 below shows an average proportion at each grade level of reading activities per teacher that reflected at least one MLO reading purpose and at least one MLO reading stance. For this analysis, only those teachers who sent in both instruction and assessment activities were included, which represents 77% of all language arts teachers who sent in classroom materials (215 out of 280)[3]. After transforming the data using an arcsin transformation, the results of the analysis for the MLO reading purposes indicate no significant difference between grades ($F(5, 209)=2.028$, $p=.076$) and no significant difference within teachers for instruction versus assessment activities ($F(1, 209)=0.773$, $p=.380$).

Similarly, for the analysis of the MLO reading stance, there is no significant difference within teachers for instruction versus assessment activities ($F(1, 209)=2.463$, $p=.118$). However, there is a significant difference at the .05 level between grade levels ($F(5, 209)=2.265$, $p=.049$). The interaction between grade level and type of material was not significant ($F(5, 209)=1.302$, $p=.264$). Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses were conducted to determine which differences between grades were significant. The

[3] MSPAP test preparation activities were not included in this analysis because of the small sample size. A comparison among the three types of activities (instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation) would have reduced the sample to only 38 teachers, which represents only 14% of all language arts teachers.

significant differences occurred within the assessment activities for two pairs of grade levels. A larger percentage of assessment activities for both 4th grade (off-grade) and 8th grade (on-grade) teachers reflected at least one MLO reading stance compared to 7th grade (off-grade) teachers (p=.034 and .047, respectively). As shown in Table 10, only 66% of the 7th grade (off-grade) teachers' assessment activities reflected an MLO reading stance versus 88% of the 4th grade (off-grade) teachers' activities and 87% of the 8th grade teachers' activities. It should be noted that although a difference between grade levels was identified as significant, the proportion of variability attributable to grade level is very small (R^2=.051)

Table 10.
Maryland Learning Outcomes for Reading Activities by Grade and Type of Activity

	All grades (n=215)	2nd grade (n=29)	3rd grade (n=42)	4th grade (n=28)	5th grade (n=34)	7th grade (n=33)	8th grade (n=49)
At least one MLO reading purpose							
Instruction activities	.80	.81	.78	.84	.81	.73	.83
Assessment activities	.76	.75	.75	.79	.79	.62	.84
At least one MLO reading stance							
Instruction activities	.88	.87	.87	.95	.84	.86	.88
Assessment activities	.83	.87	.86	.88	.84	.66	.87

Table 11 below presents an average proportion at each grade of writing activities per teacher that reflected at least one MLO writing purpose and at least two stages of the writing process. Once again, only those teachers who sent in both instruction and assessment activities were included in the analysis. This represents 70% of all language arts teachers (197 out of 280). After transforming the data using an arcsin transformation, the results of the analysis for the MLO writing purpose indicate a significant difference between grades ($F(5, 191)=2.753$, p=.020) and also a significant difference within teachers for instruction versus assessment activities ($F(1, 191)=6.742$, p=.010). There was no significant interaction between grade level and type of activity (p=.629). Therefore, across all grades more instruction activities reflected at least one MLO writing purpose compared to assessment. As can be seen in Table 11, an average of 64% of the teachers' instruction activities reflected a writing purpose whereas only 51% of the teachers' assessment activities did. Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses indicated no significant pairwise differences between grade levels, however it appears that for the assessment activities a larger percentage of 4th and 5th grade teachers' activities have a writing purpose compared to the other grade levels. Once again, while difference between grades and within instruction and assessment activities for teachers were significant, practically the differences were small (R^2=.034 for within type of activity and R^2=.067 for between grades). The analysis of the writing process indicates no significant difference within teachers

for instruction versus assessment activities ($F(1, 191)=.262$, $p=.609$). There is also no significant difference between grade levels ($F(5, 191)=.914$, $p=.473$).

Table 11.
Maryland Learning Outcomes for Writing Activities by Grade and Type of Activity

	All grades (n=197)	2nd grade (n=28)	3rd grade (n=39)	4th grade (n=28)	5th grade (n=32)	7th grade (n=28)	8th grade (n=42)
At least one MLO writing purpose							
Instruction activities	.64	.59	.61	.69	.69	.62	.63
Assessment activities	.51	.45	.45	.69	.64	.42	.44
At least two stages of writing process							
Instruction activities	.50	.43	.50	.59	.49	.51	.48
Assessment activities	.45	.45	.41	.56	.51	.36	.44

Response Required of Student

The MSPAP tasks that are scored for reading and writing require students to respond in a variety of ways including providing words, phrases, several sentences or a paragraph or more, and developing graphic organizers. Therefore, the classroom reading and writing activities from the language arts teachers were coded according to how the students were required to respond to the activity.

Reading Activities. Overall, 17% of the reading activities required only traditional response types (e.g., selected response formats and providing a word or phrase), 22% required only a limited written response (e.g., response less than a paragraph), and 59% required at least one extended response (e.g., one or more paragraphs, graphic organizer). The remaining 2% required other types of responses (e.g., drawing pictures and artwork, numerical response). The percentage of times each response type was coded is provided in Table 12. Each reading activity could potentially include one or more response types. Not surprisingly, a larger percentage of reading "tasks" included more than one response type (59%) as compared to the percentage of reading "skill exercises" (29%). The first column of the table represents all reading activities, and the second and third columns represent reading "skill exercises" and reading "tasks", respectively.

Table 12.
Response Type for Reading Activities

	All Reading Activities (n=2402)	Reading Skill (n=637)	Reading Task (n=2102)
Selected Response	25%	57%	17%
Word/Phrase	29%	42%	24%
Response Less than Paragraph	43%	18%	45%
One or more Paragraphs	42%	3%	47%
Graphic Organizer	32%	8%	35%
Drawing Pictures & Artwork	43%	2%	12%
Oral/Class/Group Discussion	10%	3%	10%
Other	9%	2%	10%
Cannot Determine	2%	1%	1%

As indicated in the table, across all reading activities only a small percentage had a selected response format (25%) and required students to provide a word or phrase (29%). Almost half of the reading activities involved a response less than a paragraph (but more than a word or phrase) (43%), a response of one or more paragraphs (42%), or drawing pictures and/or artwork (43%). Approximately one-third of the activities required students to develop a graphic organizer. As can be expected, there were differences in the types of responses for a reading "skill exercise" versus a reading "task". For example, 57% of the "skill exercises" compared to only 17% of the "tasks" had a selected response format, whereas only 3% of the "skill exercises" compared to 47% of the "tasks" required a written response of one or more paragraphs.

A few differences occurred when comparing instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities. Assessment activities contained more selected response formats (38%) than instruction activities (17%). Also, graphic organizers were used more often with instruction activities (35%) than assessment activities (26%). A larger percentage of MSPAP test preparation activities required students to write a paragraph or more (58%) or to provide a response of less than a paragraph (61%) as compared to instruction (41% and 43%, respectively) and assessment activities (42% and 40%, respectively). Moreover, a larger percentage of graphic organizers (41%) were used with MSPAP test preparation activities as compared to assessment activities (26%).

With respect to differences between grade levels, the elementary and middle grades differed in the frequency of selected response formats and responses that required a word or phrase. For assessment activities, 7th and 8th grades had higher percentages of selected response formats (about 50%) compared to 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades (about 32%). For instruction activities, 7th and 8th grades had higher percentages of activities that required a word or phrase (about 42%) than elementary grades (about 27%). In addition, assessment activities that required one or more paragraphs occurred more frequently in the 4th, 5th, and 8th grades (about 50%) compared to the 2nd, 3rd, and 7th grades (about 35%). For the

MSPAP test preparation activities, a larger percentage of activities that required one or more paragraphs occurred in the 8th grade (69%) compared to the 3rd grade (55%) and 5th grade (42%).

One other difference between grades is in the use of graphic organizers. In general, elementary grade levels had more activities that consisted of graphic organizers than the middle grades, although the specific differences vary quite a bit for each type of activity. For instance, about 40% of the instruction activities at the elementary grades included graphic organizers compared to only 31% at 7th grade and 27% at 8th grade. For assessment activities, there are also differences between on- and off-grade levels. For the 2nd and 4th grades, more than 40% of the assessment activities include graphic organizers, at the 3rd and 5th grades the percentages decrease to 27%, and at the middle grades the percentages drop to 10% (7th grade) and 14% (8th grade). Finally, for MSPAP test preparation activities, the percentage of graphic organizers is largest at the 3rd grade (64%) and smallest at the 5th and 8th grades (38% and 31%, respectively).

Writing Activities. Overall, 18% of the writing activities required only traditional response types (e.g., selected response format, making corrections, providing a word or phrase, providing a sentence or two), 40% of the writing activities required only limited written responses (e.g., one paragraph, several connected paragraphs), and 41% of the writing activities required at least one extended written response (e.g., essay, story, play, letter, speech, editorial, article). A different set of response types were coded for writing "skill exercises" and writing "tasks", because as discussed in an earlier section, one criteria for a writing activity to be coded as a writing "task" was that students were required to write at least one paragraph. About 37% of the "skill exercises" had more than one response type, and about 13% of the writing "tasks" were coded for more than response type. The first column in Table 13 provides the percentages of all writing activities for each response type. Only 12% of all writing activities had a selected response format, whereas about one-third (32%) involved writing one paragraph. In addition, 15% of the writing activities required two or more connected paragraphs and 16% required that students write a letter.

An examination of the "skill exercises" indicates that over half (54%) required students to select a response, and approximately one-third were coded as making corrections, providing a word or phrase, and providing a sentence or more (but less than a paragraph). For the writing "tasks", the most frequent response types are: one paragraph (39%), letters (20%), and connected paragraphs (18%).

Table 13.
Response Type for Writing Activities

	All Writing Activities (n=1923)	Writing Skills (n=427)	Writing Tasks (n=1569)
Selected Response	12%	54%	---
Make Correction	7%	32%	---
Word or Phrase	7%	33%	---
Sentence or More	7%	30%	---
Other Content (Numerical Value, Graph , Table)	<1%	1%	---
One Paragraph	32%	---	39%
Connected Paragraphs	15%	---	18%
Essay	7%	---	8%
Story	7%	---	9%
Letter	16%	---	20%
Play / Poem	6%	---	7%
Editorial / Critique / News Article	3%	---	4%
Speech	2%	---	3%
Other	5%	---	6%
Choice	3%	---	4%

When comparing the instruction and assessment activities for "skill exercises", a larger percentage of assessment activities (63%) compared to instruction activities (45%) required students to select a response. Within the instruction activities, there are a few differences between grades. A smaller percentage of 8th grade activities required students to select a response (27%) compared to 7th grade (47%), whereas a larger percentage of 8th grade activities required students to make corrections (50%) compared to 7th grade (29%). With regard to assessment activities, the middle grades have smaller percentages of selected response types (about 47%) in comparison to the elementary grades (ranging from 60% in 5th grade to 76% in 2nd grade).

For the writing "tasks", the percentages of response types for instruction, assessment, and MSPAP test preparation activities are quite similar. For instance, students were asked to respond in the form of one paragraph for 41% of the instruction activities, 37% of the assessment activities, and 34% of the MSPAP test preparation activities. The one noticeable difference is in the response type of "letters". Students were more frequently asked to write letters for MSPAP test preparation activities (41%) compared to instruction activities (17%) and assessment activities (22%). This is probably due to the frequency of letter-writing on MSPAP.

Grade-level differences for writing "tasks" are noticeable between the upper grades and lower grades. In general, as the grades increased there were fewer required responses of one paragraph and more required responses of several connected paragraphs. These differences occurred for the both the instruction and assessment activities. For the MSPAP test preparation activities, a larger percentage of

editorials, critiques, or news articles (13%) and speeches (10%) were required at the 8th grade, whereas 0% of these response types occurred at the 3rd grade and only 4% occurred at the 5th grade. However, a larger percentages of "letters" were required at the 3rd grade (46%) and 5th grade (52%) compared to 8th grade (29%).

Group Work

The MLO's indicate that providing students with opportunities to work collaboratively with others is an important aspect of the learning environment. Therefore, the reading and writing classroom activities from the language arts teachers were coded as to whether they involved individual, pair, and/or group work. Across all reading activities, 14% explicitly required students to work in pairs or groups. In almost two-thirds of these instances, the activity involved a combination of some pair or group work and some independent activity. Similarly, across all writing activities, 16% explicitly required students to work in pairs or groups, and in over 80% of these instances, the activities involved a combination of pair work, group work, and/or independent activity. It is possible that the percentage of actual pair or group work for the reading and writing activities may be actually higher than these percentages since pair or group work was only coded it if was explicitly indicated on the activity that students were to work together.

Integration with Other Subject Areas

The majority of the actual MSPAP tasks that assess reading and writing are integrated with other subject areas including science, social studies, and mathematics. Therefore, the classroom reading and writing activities were analyzed in terms of whether they were integrated with other subject areas. For example, a reading activity may have asked students to read an article about a new discovery in science. The reading activity may have science questions, but also reading-related questions that require taking a critical stance, such as "what did the author have to know in order to write this article?" An example of a writing activity integrated with social studies may be one in which students are asked to write a persuasive letter about their views on school prayer.

Table 14 provides the results for the integration of reading and writing activities with social studies, science, math, and art/music/social skills. Notice that the integration between reading and writing is not presented in this table. Information related to the integration between reading and writing activities was presented in Table 6, that is, 34% of all the language arts teachers' activities integrated reading and writing. Overall as shown in Table 14, the amount of integration with other subject areas is quite similar for reading and writing. About 33% of the reading activities and 32% of the writing activities were integrated with at least one other subject area. For those reading and writing activities that were integrated with other subject areas, social studies was the most common subject area (25% for reading and 22% for writing). Science was the second most commonly integrated subject (9% for reading and 10% for writing).

Table 14.

Integration of Reading and Writing with Other Subject Areas

	Reading Activities (n=2402)	Writing Activities (n=1569)
Integration with At Least One Subject Area	33%	32%
Social Studies	25%	22%
Science	9%	10%
Math	2%	3%
Art / Music / Social Skills	3%	3%
Choice	1%	2%
Cannot Determine	<1%	<1%

A comparison across the types of activities for reading shows that MSPAP test preparation activities had the largest percentage of activities integrated with at least one other subject area (61%) compared to 35% for instruction activities and only 27% for assessment activities. The two subject areas with the highest percentages for MSPAP test preparation were social studies (44%) and science (25%). Across grade levels, the percentages varied somewhat. For instruction, smaller percentages of activities integrating at least one subject area occurred at the 2nd and 3rd grades (23% and 27%, respectively) compared to approximately 40% in 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th grades. For assessment, the percentages of activities integrated with at least one subject area varied from elementary to middle grades and from on- and off-grades, with a low of 18% at the 7th grade and a high of 34% at the 8th grade. For MSPAP test preparation, 8th grade had the largest percentage of activities that were integrated with at least one subject area (67%), while 64% of the 3rd grade activities and 50% of the 5th grade activities were integrated. In general, across grade levels, when a reading activity did consist of some integration with other subjects it was most frequently with social studies, and in some cases science for MSPAP test preparation activities.

The results for the writing activities are somewhat similar to the reading activities. Across all grades, the percentages of integration for writing instruction and assessment activities (32% and 27%) were lower than for the MSPAP test preparation activities (71%). With respect to differences between grades for instruction, the lower elementary grades (2nd and 3rd) have lower percentages of activities that are integrated with at least one subject area (21% and 22%, respectively) compared to the upper elementary and middle grades (ranging from 33% to 42%). Differences between grades occur for elementary versus middle and on- versus off-grades. . For instruction and assessment activities, the most frequently integrated subject is social studies, and science is the next most frequently integrated subject. The remaining subject areas are rarely integrated with writing. This is consistent across grade levels. However, for the MSPAP test preparation activities in the 3rd and 5th grades, in addition to social studies

and science being integrated with writing, mathematics is also frequently integrated with writing (23% for 3rd grade and 28% for 5th grade).

Similarity to MSPAP Tasks

The reading and writing activities were coded with respect to their similarity to MSPAP tasks. Two five-level scales were developed that considered the MLO's for reading and writing and also the type of response students were required to provide. The levels of the "MSPAP scale" for reading and the "MSPAP scale" for writing were similar. For instance, the first level of the scale, labeled as "not like MSPAP- skill", included activities that involved only "skill exercises" with no "tasks". The second through the fifth levels of the MSPAP scale were used when the activities were classified as "tasks", and they ranged from "not like MSPAP- task" to "MSPAP high". Figure 1 below provides descriptors of a typical task for each of the five levels of the reading "MSPAP scale".

Figure 1.
Description of the Five Levels of the Reading "MSPAP Scale"

"MSPAP scale" Levels for Reading	Descriptors of Levels for Reading
Not like MSPAP-skill	Reading activities with only reading "skill exercises" Does not reflect any MLO reading purposes Does not reflect any MLO reading stances Includes vocabulary exercises, reference skills, pronunciation, etc.
Not like MSPAP-task	Reading activities with a reading "task" Does not reflect any MLO reading purposes Reflects only the global understanding MLO reading stance Involves reading one or more paragraphs Requires answering selected response or short answer items Requires very few inferences
MSPAP low	Reading activities with a reading "task" Reflects at least one MLO reading purpose Reflects at least one MLO reading stance, typically global understanding Involves reading one or more paragraphs Requires answering in the form of one or more sentences Primarily requires low-level inferences
MSPAP medium	Reading activities with a reading "task" Reflects at least one MLO reading purpose Reflects at least one MLO reading stance, with at least one reading stance beyond global understanding (interpretive, critical, or personal stance) Typically involves answering about 2 or 3 questions that require a response of a few sentences, a paragraph, or more Requires some high level inferences Contains all the elements of a MSPAP task, but is not as extended
MSPAP high	Reading activities with a reading "task" Reflects at least one MLO reading purpose Reflects at least one MLO reading stance, with at least one reading stance beyond global understanding (interpretive, critical, or personal stance) Typically involves answering more than three questions that require a response of a paragraph or more Requires high level inferences Requires examples, details, and/or reasons to support the response Contains all the elements of a MSPAP task and is extended

Table 15 provides the percentages of reading activities at each of the five levels. As shown, 25% of the reading activities are considered to be "not like MSPAP", whether they are "skill exercises" only or reading "tasks", whereas 75% of the reading activities have at least some elements of MSPAP. The majority of the activities are at a "MSPAP low" level (42%), while 23% are at a medium and 10% are at a high level.

Table 15.
Reading MSPAP Scale

	All Reading Activities (n=2402)
Not like MSPAP-skill	12%
Not like MSPAP-task	13%
MSPAP Low	42%
MSPAP Medium	23%
MSPAP High	10%

The writing "MSPAP scale" also has five levels with the first level reflecting only writing "skill exercises" and the remaining four levels reflecting writing "tasks" ranging from "not like MSPAP- task" to a "MSPAP high". Figure 2 provides descriptors of typical tasks at each of the five levels of the writing "MSPAP scale".

Figure 2.
Description of the Five Levels of the Writing "MSPAP Scale"

"MSPAP scale" Levels for Writing	Descriptors of Levels for Writing
Not like MSPAP-skill	Writing activities with only writing "skill exercises" Does not reflect any MLO writing purposes Does not reflect any stages of the MLO writing process Includes exercises involving spelling, grammar, capitalization, punctuation, etc.
Not like MSPAP-task	Writing activities with a writing "task" Does not reflect any MLO writing purposes Does not reflect any stages of the MLO writing process, other than writing a draft Example Task: writing a draft that summarizes and/or interprets reading material
MSPAP low	Writing activities with a writing "task" Either reflects at least one MLO writing purpose, or reflects some or all stages of the writing process Example Task: writing a draft of a letter to a congressman stating a position on a particular issue Example Task: developing a graphic organizer, writing a draft that discusses how characters in the story dealt with conflict, and revising the draft
MSPAP medium	Writing activities with a writing "task" Reflects at least one MLO writing purpose, and reflects some stages of the writing process Example Task: organize thoughts on an issue using a graphic organizer and write a letter to a congressman stating a position on a particular issue
MSPAP high	Writing activities with a writing "task" Reflects at least one MLO writing purpose, and reflects all stages of the writing process Example Task: organize thoughts on an issue using a graphic organizer, write a letter to a congressman stating a position on a particular issue, then revise and proofread the letter

Table 16 provides the percentages of writing activities at each of the five levels. As shown, the first two levels of the scale combined represent 29% of the activities that are considered to be "not like MSPAP", either "skill exercises" only or writing "tasks". Therefore, the remaining 70% of the writing

activities have at least some elements of MSPAP. There are 31% of the writing activities at the third level, which includes tasks that either have an MLO-defined writing purpose or reflect at least some of the stages of the writing process. The fourth level includes 26% of the activities which reflect both an MLO-defined writing purpose and two or three stages of the writing process. Finally, the fifth level, which contains 14% of the activities, represents activities that reflect an MLO-defined writing purpose and all four stages of the writing process.

Table 16.
Writing MSPAP Scale

	All Writing Activities n=1923
Not like MSPAP-skill	18%
Not like MSPAP-task: no MLO, draft only	11%
MSPAP low: MLO or some/all stages of writing process	31%
MSPAP medium: MLO and some stages of writing process	25%
MSPAP high: MLO and all stages of writing process	14%

Comparisons by grade level and type of activity. To determine if there are differences in the level of similarity to MSPAP tasks between grade levels and within instruction and assessment activities, a repeated measures analysis of variance with one between factor (grade) and one within factor (type of activity) was conducted. Table 17 below shows an average MSPAP level for teachers at each grade level. For this analysis, only those teachers who sent in both instruction and assessment reading activities were included, which represents 77% of all language arts teachers who sent in classroom materials (215 out of 280). Similar to the previous analysis for the reading MLO's, the MSPAP test preparation activities were not included in this analysis because of the small sample size. The results of the analysis for the reading "MSPAP scale" indicate no significant difference within teachers for instruction versus assessment activities ($F(1, 209)=.187$, $p=.666$). However, a significant difference occurred between grade levels ($F(5, 209)=4.920$, $p<.001$). The interaction between grade and type of activity was not significant ($p=.326$).

Table 17.
Similarity to Actual MSPAP Reading Tasks by Grade and Type of Activity

	All grades (n=215)	2nd grade (n=29)	3rd grade (n=42)	4th grade (n=28)	5th grade (n=34)	7th grade (n=33)	8th grade (n=49)
Instruction activities	3.04	2.80	2.88	3.32	3.04	2.86	3.26
Assessment activities	3.01	2.74	3.01	3.44	3.08	2.55	3.17

Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses indicated two significant pairwise differences between grades for instruction reading activities. The average level on the reading "MSPAP scale" was higher for both the 4th grade and 8th grade compared to the 2nd grade (p=.044 and p=.041, respectively). Three significant pairwise differences occurred between grade levels for the assessment reading activities. Both the 4th grade and the 8th grade had higher average levels on the reading "MSPAP scale" than the 7th grade (p=.002 and p=.034, respectively). In addition, the 4th grade also had a higher average MSPAP level compared to 2nd grade (p=.047). However, the difference between grades was small in a practical sense (R^2=.105).

A repeated measures analysis of variance was also conducted to examine differences in the writing activities between grades and within type of activity. Table 18 indicates average writing MSPAP levels for teachers at each grade level and type of activity. Once again, only those teachers who sent in both instruction and assessment activities were included in this analysis, which represents 70% of all language arts teachers (197 out of 280). The results of the analysis indicate a significant difference within teachers for instruction versus assessment activities (F(1, 191)=6.294, p=.013). Instruction activities have a higher MSPAP level than assessment activities, although practically the difference is very small (R^2=.017). There is also a significant difference between grade levels (F(5, 191)=3.622, p=.004). Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses indicate one significant pairwise difference between grades. For assessment activities, there was a higher MSPAP level at the 4th grade level compared to the 3rd grade level (p=.018). However, the amount of total variance accounted for by the grade level is small (R^2=.087). There was no interaction between grade and type of activity (p=.641).

Table 18.
Similarity to Actual MSPAP Writing Tasks by Grade and Type of Activity

	All grades (n=197)	2nd grade (n=28)	3rd grade (n=39)	4th grade (n=28)	5th grade (n=32)	7th grade (n=28)	8th grade (n=42)
Instruction activities	3.09	2.82	3.00	3.37	3.18	3.01	3.15
Assessment activities	2.87	2.68	2.58	3.36	3.10	2.60	2.92

Discussion

Overall Comparisons Between Reading and Writing

In general, the majority of the language arts teachers' classroom activities in this analysis reflected some of the Maryland Learning Outcomes. Approximately 80% of all reading activities required students to read for literary experience, read to be informed, and/or read to perform a task. In addition, 88% of all reading activities also required students to analyze the reading passage in a global, interpretive, personal, and/or critical stance, with the majority of these activities taking a global and/or interpretive stance (84%) and only 35% taking a personal and/or critical stance. For the writing activities, 60% required students to write to inform, write to persuade, and/or write to express personal ideas, and an additional 21% required students to summarize and interpret reading material, although the latter is not an MLO writing purpose. Approximately 50% of all writing activities in this analysis required students to use at least two stages of the writing processes, that is, going beyond writing a draft to include a prewriting activity, revision, and/or proofreading.

The extent to which the Maryland Learning Outcomes and the characteristics of MSPAP are reflected in the reading and writing activities is shown by the results of the coding for the "MSPAP scales". Overall, the percentages of reading activities at each level of the reading "MSPAP scale" compared to the writing activities at each level of the writing "MSPAP scale" are quite similar. When combining the first two scale levels, "not like MSPAP-skills" and "not like MSPAP-task", about 25% of reading activities and 29% of writing activities are considered to be "not like MSPAP". The remaining reading and writing activities have at least some elements of MSPAP tasks. There is a slightly larger percentage of reading activities that are classified as "MSPAP low" (42%) compared to writing activities (31%) and there are slightly smaller percentages of reading activities classified as "MSPAP medium" and "MSPAP high" (23% and 10%), compared to writing activities (25% and 14%). Thus, although the majority of the classroom activities reflected the Maryland Learning Outcomes to some extent, only 33% of the reading activities and 39% of the writing activities received one of the two highest levels of the MSPAP scale.

For other reading and writing components such as integration with other subject areas and group work, the percentages were quite similar for both content areas. Only a small percentage of reading and writing activities included an explicit mention of either pair or group work (about 15%). Recall that this percentage may be an underestimate of the extent of group work used in teachers' classrooms, since pair or group work was only coded if there was an explicit mention on the activity sent in by the teacher. The percentage of tasks that were integrated with at least one subject area was about 33% for both reading and writing. The most frequently integrated subject area for reading and writing was social studies, and the next most frequent was science.

Comparisons Within Type of Activity for Reading and Writing

In general, the instruction and assessment activities were similar with regard to the MLO's and the MSPAP scale for both reading and writing. When differences between instruction and assessment activities were detected in the analysis, the differences were small. As might be expected, there were some relatively large differences for the MSPAP test preparation activities compared to the instruction and assessment activities. As an example, 30% of the reading instruction activities and 36% of the reading assessment activities received one of the two highest "MSPAP scale" levels, whereas 49% of the reading MSPAP test preparation activities received one of the two highest levels. In addition, 42% of the writing instruction activities and 35% of the writing assessment activities received one of the two highest "MSPAP scale" levels, whereas 66% of the writing MSPAP test preparation activities received one of the two highest levels. As another example, approximately 70% of the MSPAP test preparation reading and writing activities were integrated with at least one other subject area, whereas only about 35% of the instruction and assessment activities were integrated.

Comparison Among Grade Levels, and Between Classroom Activities and Teacher Questionnaire Responses

In general, there were few differences among the grades for the instruction and assessment activities and when differences were obtained they were small. This is consistent with the results obtained from the teacher questionnaire (Lane, Ventrice, Cerrillo, Parke & Stone, 1999). As an example, 4th and 8th grade reading assessment tasks reflected the reading stances more often than 7th grade assessment tasks, and 4th and 8th grade reading assessments were more aligned to the MSPAP tasks than were the 7th grade assessment tasks. These findings are somewhat consistent with the questionnaire results in that all elementary grades and 8th grade teachers indicated that their instruction and assessment activities were more similar to the reading learning outcomes than did the 7th grade teachers.

The average level on the "MSPAP scale" for reading and writing activities was a "MSPAP low". Even though approximately 75% of the classroom activities reflected at least some elements of an actual MSPAP task, only about 35% were classified at the "MSPAP medium" or "MSPAP high" level. Teachers' responses on the language arts questionnaire with regard to current reading and writing instruction indicated a somewhat greater degree of alignment between their classroom activities and the Maryland Learning Outcomes. On a 4-point Likert scale, where a "1" indicated no alignment and a "4" indicated a great amount of alignment, in general, teachers' responses averaged at about a "3" level.

Comparison Between Language Arts and Mathematics Classroom Activities

Overall, when examining the similarity between the classroom activities and MSPAP tasks, the reading and writing activities appear to be slightly more aligned to MSPAP than the mathematics activities. As an example, 11% of the reading instruction activities and 16% of the writing instruction

activities were classified as "not like MSPAP- skill" and an additional 11% and 8%, respectively, were classified as "not like MSPAP- task". In contrast, 39% of the mathematics activities were classified as "not like MSPAP-computation/equation" and an additional 6% were classified as "not like MSPAP-traditional word problems" (Lane, Parke, & Stone, 1998, 1999).

Conclusion

The analysis of the classroom activities suggests that the majority of the classroom instruction and assessment activities provided by the language arts teachers reflect the Maryland Learning Outcomes. However, the extent to which the classroom instruction and assessment activities reflect the many characteristics of the MSPAP tasks is more limited. Slightly more than one-third of the classroom instruction and assessment tasks were classified at one of the two highest score levels on the MSPAP scale. However, 49% of the reading and 66% of the writing MSPAP test preparation activities were classified at one of the two highest score levels on the MSPAP scale. These results help support the results from the language arts questionnaire suggesting that teachers have made changes in their instruction based on the Maryland Learning Outcomes and MSPAP (Lane, Ventrice, Cerrillo, Parke & Stone, 1999). However, their classroom activities may not reflect the MLO's and MSPAP to the extent to which they had indicated on the questionnaire.

References

Lane, S., Parke, C.S. & Stone, C.A. (1998). Consequences of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, San Diego, CA.

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